

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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FOLLOWING LAHORE 0380 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
ISLAMABAD KARACHI NEW DELHI APRIL 15; REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN PUNJAB CRISIS DEEPENS

REF: LAHORE 0371

1. SUMMARY: VIOLENCE ERUPTED IN LAHORE AGAIN APRIL 14
WITH CLASHES BETWEEN WORKERS AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEM-
ONSTRATORS. UNREST CONTINUES IN OTHER PARTS OF PUNJAB AS
WELL. BHUTTO ADDRESSED PARTY WORKERS IN LAHORE ON 14TH,
URGING RESTRAINT ON ONE HAND, SELF DEFENSE ON OTHER. THIRD
PPP MEMBER OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY HAS DEFECTED AND GROUP OF
PPP DISSIDENTS HAS ISSUED STATEMENT CALLING ON PARTY WORKERS
TO REFRAIN FROM VIOLENCE AND DEMAND FRESH ELECTIONS. LEADER
OF INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION GROUP IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY
THREATENED THEY WILL RESIGN IF POLICE RESORT TO FURTHER
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VIOLENCE AGAINST PNA DEMONSTRATORS IN LAHORE PNA LEADERS
HAVE APPARENTLY CLOSED DOORS ON NE958-589, 3/:305 9, 5#38
534. , I.E. BHUTTO'S RESIGNATION AND FRESH ELECTIONS.
PRO-OPPOSITION URDU DAILY NAWA-I-WAQT WARNED BHUTTO IN
APRIL 14 EDITORIAL THAT TIME IS SLIPPING OUT OF HIS HANDS
AND DEMAND FOR FRESH ELECTIONS TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MUST
BE ACCEPTED. OPPOSITION PLANS TO TAKE OUT SEVEN MAJOR

PROCESSIONS IN LAHORE APRIL 15, ALL OF WHICH ARE TO CONVERGE ON MAIN DOWNTOWN AREA. CITY IS TENSE AND MORE VIOLENCE IS EXPECTED. END SUMMARY.

2. PNA DEMONSTRATORS TOOK OUT PROCESSION IN DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AREA THURSDAY EVENING (APRIL 14) AND ATTEMPTED TO BURN DOWN A CINEMA HOUSE. ONE PERSON REPORTEDLY WAS WOUNDED WHEN WATCHMAN AT CINEMA OPENED FIRE. PROTESTORS DAMAGED A GAS STATION AND SET FIRE TO AUTOMOBIL TIRES IN STREET. GROUP PROCEEDED TO OLD CITY AREA AFTER POLICE BROKE THEM UP WHERE THEY WERE INTERCEPTED BY PPP WORKERS WHO TRIED TO STOP THEM FROM BURNING PPP FLAGS AND SIGNBOARDS. POLICE INTERVENED IMMEDIATELY AND SEPARATED TWO GROUPS BEFORE SITUATION GOT OUT OF CONTROL. EARLIER IN DAY PNA WORKERS TOOK OUT A PROCESSION FROM DATTA DARBAR SHRINE. NO ARRESTS WERE MADE ALTHOUGH DEMONSTRATORS TORE OUT IRON FENCE ALONG PORTIONS OF LOWER MALL. HARTAL IS STILL BEING OBSERVED. VIOLENT DEMONSTRATORS WERE HELD IN SIALKOT AND SARGODHA AND PEACEFUL PROTESTS CONTINUE IN OTHER TOWNS AND CITIES OF PUNJAB.

3. PPP WORKERS CAME OUT IN PROCESSION AFTER MEETING WITH BHUTTO AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE (SEE PARA 4) AND PARADED THROUGH DIFFERENT STREETS OF CITY. MOB OF 150-200 OF THEM DEMONSTRATED IN FRONT OF NAWA-I-WAQT'S OFFICE SHOUTING PARTY SLOGANS. POLICE HAD TO PREVENT THEM BREAKING INTO BUILDING. FURTHER DOWN STREET MOB ATTEMPTED TO SET PNA FLAG ON FIRE, BUT FAILED. NO ARRESTS WERE REPORTED.

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4. BHUTTO MET WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND PARTY WORKERS AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE THURSDAY MORNING (APRIL 14) AND CALLED ON THEM TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. ACCORDING PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS REPORTS, HE SAID HE WAS AWARE OF OPPOSITION EXCESSES, BUT ASKED WORKERS TO REMAIN CALM UNTIL FRIDAY (APRIL 15) WHEN OPPOSITION PLANNED TO HOLD FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS. BHUTTO TOLD THEM THEY HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO DEFEND THEMSELVES IF THEY ARE ATTACKED, PPP OFFICES, AS WELL AS LIFE AND PROPERTY OF PEOPLE, HE ADDED, SHOULD BE PROTECTED. WHEN THE SITUATION PERMITS, SECTION 144 WILL BE LIFTED IN LAHORE, ALLOWING PPP WORKERS TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS AND TAKE OUT PROCESSIONS. REFERRING TO FOREIGN NEWS BROADCASTS (UNSPECIFIED), BHUTTO TOLD WORKERS NOT TO BE MISLED BY INCORRECT FACTS OR FIGURES. HE REMINDED THEM OF DUBIOUS ROLE PLAYED BY FOREIGN INFORMATION MEDIA DURING 1965 AND 1971 INDO-PAKISTAN WARS.

5. IN SAME SPEECH, BHUTTO REPEATED HIS OFFER TO OPPOSITION LEADERS TO SIT DOWN AND TALK. IF THESE LEADERS COULD GO

TO THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE OF FIELD MARSHAL AYUB KHAN, HE SAID, WHY ARE THEY SHY OF SITTING IN A CONFERENCE WITH ME. AT SAME TIME, HE WARNED IT WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT FOR AN ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT WITH ALL THE RESOURCES AT ITS DISPOSAL TO KEEP A FEW HUNDRED HOOLIGANS FROM COMMITTING VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WAS OPPOSED TO ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES WHICH COULD RESULT IN LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE.

6. ALI ASLAM WARAICH, MEMBER OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY FROM LYALLPUR DISTRICT, RESIGNED FROM HIS SEAT APRIL 14 AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS LEAVING PPP AS WELL. WARAICH REPORTEDLY SAID HE LEFT PARTY AS PROTEST AGAINST "CRUEL AND INHUMAN PRACTICES" OF PPP SECRETARY GENERAL (PUNJAB) KHALID MALIK. MALIK, HE CLAIMED, HAD THREATENED HIM WITH VIOLENCE IF HE LEFT THE PARTY. FOUR PPP DISSIDENTS -- FORMER MPA'S SYEDA ABIDA HUSSAIN AND ABDUL HAFEEZ KARDAY, EX-MNA KHURSHID HASSAN MIR AND FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL (PUNJAB) LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAJ MOHAMMAD LANGAH -- ISSUED JOINT STATEMENT IN LAHORE APRIL 14 URGING PPP WORKERS TO DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM PARTY AND SUPPOT PNA. STATEMENT ALLEGED THAT BHUTTO HAS DECIDED TO PUSH COUNTRY INTO CIVIL WAR TO KEEP HIMSELF IN POWER. IT CLAIMED ALL LOCAL PPP ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ARM THEIR WORKERS AND INCITE VIOLENCE AGAINST OPPOSITION. STATEMENT CALLED ON WORKERS TO DEMAND RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, END OF VIOLENCE AND FRESH ELECTIONS.

7. SARDARZADA ZAFAR ABBAS, LEADER OF EIGHT-MAN INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION GROUP IN PUNJAB ASSEMBLY, WARNED IN SPEECH APRIL 14 AT CHINIOT (JHANG DISTRICT) THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD RESIGN FROM ASSEMBLY IF POLICE RESORT TO VIOLENCE AGAINST DEMONSTRATORS IN LAHORE. ABBAS SAID THERE WOULD BE NO HARM TO COUNTRY IF BHUTTO STEPPED DOWN AND ANY PERSON COULD BE ELECTED AS INTERIM PRIME MINISTER. ELECTIONS SHOULD BE HELD AGAIN FOLLOWING FORMATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. ABBAS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CONSTITUTION BE PRESERVED TO SAFEGUARD COUNTRY'S INTEGRITY.

8. PNA LEADERS REJECT DIALOGUE OFFER: PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE (PML) LEADER PIR OF PIGARO ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT APRIL 14 AT LAHORE IN WHICH HE DECLARED PNA WILL STICK TO ITS DEMANDS. FIRST AND FOREMOST, BHUTTO AND THE ELECTION COMMISSION MUST RESIGN. PNA, HE STATED, HAS ALWAYS FELT THAT POLITICAL DIALOGUE COULD NOT BE HELD WITH BHUTTO. IF HE RESIGNS AND SOMEONE ELSE TAKES HIS PLACE ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION, THEN TALKS ABOUT FRESH ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD WITH HIS SUCCESSOR. HE REITERATED NO BEHIND-THE-DOOR ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE ARE BEING MADE. PNA ACTING PRESIDENT NAWABZADA NASRULLAH KHAN RETURNED TO LAHORE APRIL 14 FOLLOWING

VISIT TO PESHAWAR AND TOLD PRESS THAT QUOTE THERE IS NO QUESTION OF ANY FORMULA....WE ARE STILL HOLDING OUR STAND. UNQUOTE. KHAN SAID HE DISCUSSED GENERAL SITUATION WITH MUFTI MAHMOOD AND BEGUM WALI KHAN AND DENIED THAT PNA HAD RECEIVED ANY NEW OFFER FROM BHUTTO. NASRULLAH ASSERTED THAT MORE THAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EIGHT THOUSAND PEOPLE HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN NWFP, WITH ELEVEN HUNDRED INTERNED IN HARIPUR JAIL ALONE. HE SAID HE MET VARIOUS PNA LEADERS AND HELD A MEETING OF NWFP PROVINCIAL COUNCIL. HE DESCRIBED HIS TALKS WITH KHAN GHAFAR KHAN AS "INFORMAL." REFERRING TO SITUATION IN LAHORE, HE CLAIMED PPP PROCESSIONS WERE BEING TAKEN OUT BY POLICE AND FSF IN MUFTI AND WARNED GOVERNMENT THAT THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES IF TROUBLE WAS CREATED.

9. PRO-OPPOSITION URDU DAILY NAWA-I-WAQT WARNED BHUTTO IN EDITORIAL APRIL 14 THAT TIME IS FAST SLIPPING OUT OF HIS HANDS AND ADVISED HIM TO ACCEPT PNA DEMAND FOR FRESH ELECTIONS. EDITORIAL URGED HIM TO TAKE COURAGEOUS AND PATRIOTIC STEP IMMEDIATELY. (IT APPEARS THAT NAWA-I-WAQT, PREVIOUSLY ADVOCATED COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT, NOW SHARES PNA BELIEF THAT BHUTTOS'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED.)

10. OPPOSITION PLANS TO TAKE OUT SEVEN MAJOR PROCESSIONS IN LAHORE TODAY (APRIL 15) AND MASS ITS DEMONSTRATORS ON THE MALL. SMALLER PROCESSIONS WILL REPORTEDLY COME OUT OF EVERY MOSQUE IN THE CITY. CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN PNA DEMONSTRATORS AND PPP WORKERS ARE WIDELY EXPECTED. SMALL ARMY UNITS ARE ENCAMPED IN AT LEAST TWO PLACES WITHIN CITY, BUT POLICE AND FSF WILL LIKELY BEAR MAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER.

11. BHUTTO ATTENDED RECEPTION HELD IN HIS HONOR BY CORPS COMMANDER AND ARMY OFFICER OF LAHORE GARRISON APRIL 14. PUNJAB GOVERNOR ABBASI, CHIEF MINISTER QURESHI, SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PUNJAB ASSEMBLY ALSO ATTENDED. EVENT GOT PRESS AND TV PUBLICITY, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN IN TERMS OF ARMY ATTITUDE IN PRESENT CRISIS.

12. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, CONGEN HAS ALLOWED ALL BUT A FEW KEY LOCAL EMPLOYEES TO RETURN HOME AT 1230 HOURS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMERICAN CITIZENS HAVE BEEN WARNED OFF THE STREETS.

13. LATE ITEM: OPPOSITION TOOK OUT BIG PROCESSION ON MALL TODAY (APRIL 15), WHICH APPARENTLY BROKE UP PEACEFULLY AROUND 1700 HOURS. CONGEN POL OFFICER TOURED AREA AT 1830 HOURS AND SAW NO EVIDENCE OF VIOLENCE OR DAMAGE TO PUBLIC PROPERTY. HOWEVER, SEVERAL COLUMNS OF SMOKE COULD BE SEEN RISING OFF MALL IN MCLEOD ROAD AREA WHERE CLASHES MAY BE GOING ON. SO FAR, SITUATION DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AS BAD AS IT WAS IN LAHORE APRIL 9. GAMON UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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